

NMEP Case Study Sites Project—
National Medicare & You Education Program
Case Study Sites Assessment:
Media Monitoring Analysis

Purpose: Since 1998, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has tracked NMEP activities through case studies in six communities in Ohio, Arizona, Washington, Oregon, Massachusetts, and Florida. In each of these six study sites, CMS has assessed the performance of several information channels in order to fine-tune communication methods and improve their quality. Channels studied included beneficiary print materials, the *Medicare & You* handbook, the 1-800-Medicare telephone hotline, the *Medicare.gov* Web site, the National Alliance Network, enhanced SHIP counseling programs, the Regional Education About Choices in Healthcare (REACH) campaign, plus national training and support programs.

Using a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods, including telephone interviews, media monitoring and evaluation, site visits to study communities, and a telephone survey of people with Medicare, the study team set out to accomplish the following research objectives: 1) to gain an understanding of local factors affecting Medicare communication within each of the six communities; 2) to identify key Medicare information intermediaries, their channels of communication, and their perceptions of Medicare; 3) to assess perceptions and experiences of people with Medicare, their information needs and issues of concern, and their patterns of information-seeking; and 4) to assess the responses of intermediaries and individuals with Medicare to CMS' national media campaign.

Results: Generally, Medicare was a sub-topic in most media coverage, used to illustrate larger health-related news stories. Very few media stories served as quality sources of straight Medicare information. That is, very little coverage included Medicare information, messages, and resources.

Key findings from this study are as follows:

- Most earned media stories in the six markets were situational, reporting on a specific news topic that happened to relate to Medicare.
 - Only 10 percent of the stories presented resource-rich Medicare information or in-depth options to readers.
- Medicare messaging was absent in most coverage.
 - Less than 10 percent of coverage repeated the Medicare messages that were identified for monitoring purposes.

- Instead, most coverage contained only passing references to Medicare topics.
- Medicare resources were absent in most coverage.
 - Less than 10 percent of coverage cited Medicare resources.
 - When these resources were presented, they appeared mostly in paid advertisements, or in stories about Medicare campaigns.
- Media are not raising awareness of everything Medicare has to offer.
 - Exposure to useful and positive Medicare information is quite limited among people with Medicare.
 - With media coverage seldom citing CMS tools, outlets are not helping consumers make decisions about health care providers or nursing homes.
- Approximately 90 percent of the media coverage in the six markets was done by television (52 percent) and daily newspapers (37 percent).
- Negative stories outweighed positive stories across all markets, 44 percent to 26 percent.
 - Neutral or informational coverage accounted for the remaining 30 percent of coverage.
 - The negative tone of much earned media coverage stemmed from an abundance of election-related coverage where candidates criticized the health care *status quo*.
- The Nursing Home Quality Initiative (NHQI) garnered the best coverage.
 - The NHQI fostered the best, most quality earned media coverage across the six study markets—that is, coverage that communicated key Medicare messaging and resources, such as *1-800-Medicare* and *Medicare.gov*.
 - News about the NHQI was covered in five of the six study markets.
 - In four of the six markets, it was a top five story.
- There was more Medicare-related media coverage in Year Two of the study, but trends remained about the same as in Year One.

- In Year Two, researchers collected 577 media hits from the six study sites, more than three times as many as in Year One (158).
 - The discrepancy is due to the wider search terms used in Year Two's collection process, and to the fact that CMS launched concentrated Medicare campaigns that year.
- But in spite of the differences in volume, major TV networks and daily newspapers remained the most popular kinds of information from Year One to Year Two—and the ratio of negative to positive coverage also held steady (around 44 percent to 25 percent).
 - As in Year One, most coverage in Year Two did not cite a Medicare resource.
 - Even less Medicare messaging penetrated coverage in Year Two than in Year One.
- State legislators were quoted or attributed to most often (due to the abundance of election coverage), whereas CMS was not a looked-to source in the majority of Medicare-related coverage.
 - Most occurrences of CMS quotes and attribution were in stories related to the Agency's own initiatives and announcements.